

A Discussion Based on Reason

BY SAKURADA Jun

"If you were born here, then of course you love your country. But you should admit that there are plenty of other people who love this country even if they do not think as you do."

KIYOSAWA Kiyoshi, a foreign policy critic active in the pre-war period, wrote those words as an introduction to a book entitled "Hijyou Nihon e no Chokugen" (Frank Words to a Japan in Crisis) in 1933, as an admonishment to children. KIYOSAWA's opinion that Japan ought to cooperate with the U.S. and China was being increasingly rejected as "national sentiment" towards the outside world took on a gloomy aspect with Japan slipping into international isolation after the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the Shanghai Incident in 1932, and the construction of the Manchurian state. The passage by KIYOSAWA shows the anguish of the pre-war liberalists.

When one speaks of foreign policy under the contemporary democratic system, one thing to which close attention must be paid is the degree of distance between policy and what is described as "national sentiment." After 2000, various difficult issues have arisen between Japan and its three closest neighbors, China, South Korea and North Korea. As a result, "national sentiment" toward these three countries has deteriorated. In particular, the "national sentiment" toward North Korea in the debates surrounding nuclear weapons, missile development and the abductions of Japanese has gone beyond simple antipathy to verge on a discussion that is reminiscent of the justification in the pre-war period that disobedient Chinese should be punished.

The policy toward North Korea of "taking a firm stance" may have been formulated on a consensus of "national sentiment," but that firm stance does not necessarily lead to a reasoned concrete policy by itself. What is really needed is to remove any "national sentiment" or "preconceptions" from policy directed at North Korea.

Democracy is a political system which assumes a risk that "national sentiment" will be directly reflected in the policy making process, but is also able to mitigate that risk through the broad development of a cool-headed, practical discussion of policy. KIYOSAWA's advice was particularly meaningful on this point: "when reason and

sentiment clash, reason should be taken without hesitation.”

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